

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 10661 031946Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 /018 W
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R 031305Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO USDOC WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4621

UNCLAS CARACAS 10661

FOR COMMERCE/MEPD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BTIO, EWWT, VE

SUBJ: PORT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

MAJOR PROJECT:

1. THE LOCAL PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, A REPORT WILL BE SENT TO PRESIDENT PEREZ FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PORTS (INP) REQUESTING THAT A DECISION BE MADE ON WHETHER TO ENLARGE THE PRESENT PORT OF LA GUAIRA, BUILD AN ALTERNATE PORT AT CARENERO, OR EXECUTE BOTH PROJECTS. CONGESTION AT LA GUAIRA, THE PRINCIPAL PORT SERVICING CARACAS, HAS MADE A RAPID DECISION OBLIGATORY.

2. THE EXPANSION OF LA GUAIRA WOULD REQUIRE AN INVESTMENT OF 225-259 MILLION BOLIVARES. THE PRESIDENT OF (INP), LAURO TORRES VARELA, HAS BEGUN DISCUSSIONS WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FIRMS ABOUT THIS PROJECT; HOWEVER, HE STATED THAT NO COMMITMENTS WILL BE UNDERTAKEN UNTIL PRESIDENT PEREZ MAKES HIS DECISION REGARDING RESOLUTION OF THE PORT CONGESTION PROBLEM. IF LA GUAIRA'S EXPANSION IS AUTHORIZED THEN THERE IS ALSO A NEED TO ENLARGE THE CARACAS-LA GUAIRA HIGHWAY AND SOUBLETTE AVENUE AS BOTH ARE PRESENTLY OPERATING AT 100 PER CENT CAPACITY.

3. CARENERO WAS PICKED FROM FIVE POSSIBLE SITES AS THE MOST APPROPRIATE SITE FOR AN ALTERNATE PORT. IT HAS THE BEST TOPOGRAPHY FOR FUTURE EXPANSION AND AMPLIFICATION OF SHORE FACILITIES. AS AN "UNDEVELOPED AREA", INSTALLATION OF A PORT AT

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CARENERO WOULD ALSO COINCIDE WITH THE GOV'S POLICY OF DECEN-

TRIALIZATION OF INDUSTRY. A PORT AT CARENERO WOULD ESTABLISH A POLE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE TUY VALLEY THAT WOULD BE COMPLEMENTED BY THE INSTALLATION OF A RAILROAD LINK WITH THAT ZONE. SO FAR, ONLY A PORT CONSTRUCTION FEASIBILITY STUDY HAS BEEN DONE. AN INVESTMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY AWAITS THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION.

4. WHATEVER PRESIDENT PEREZ DECIDES, REMEDIAL ACTION DEFINITELY WILL BE REQUIRED. THE BASIC PROBLEM OF A LACK OF ADEQUATE FREIGHT HANDLING AND STORAGE SPACE, AGGRAVATED BY IMPORTER DELAYS IN REMOVING CARGO FROM THE PORT AREA, IS EXPECTED TO BE FURTHER WORSENER BY: (A) THE INCREASINGLY BURDENSOME VOLUME OF CUSTOMARY IMPORTS, (B) ARRIVAL OF AN ANTICIPATED 200 MILLION TONS OF FOODSTUFFS, TO BRIDGE THE DEFICIT RESULTING FROM RECENT FLOODS, AND (C) THE USUAL WINTER VOLUME INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CRUISE SHIPS CALLING AT LA GUAIRA. COMBINED, THESE FACTORS HAVE MADE INP DESPERATE FOR A PROMPT, EFFECTIVE, SOLUTION.
VAKY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, REPORTS, PORT CONGESTION, CONSTRUCTION, PORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CARACA10661
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760336-0044
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760994/aaaadcnptel
Line Count: 79
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cahillha
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 FEB 2004 by MaustMC>; APPROVED <14 JAN 2005 by cahillha>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PORT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT MAJOR PROJECT
TAGS: BTIO, EWWT, VE, (PEREZ, CARLOS ANDRES)
To: COM
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006